

# Multiparty Agreement

Multiparty agreements (e.g., interagency agreements, memoranda of agreement, memoranda of understanding) can be a valuable way to bring multiple organizations together to address a common issue, serve a common client base, or otherwise develop a more efficient and effective way to work together. This section will help you plan the development of your multiparty agreement. It poses important considerations and questions designed to help make key decisions, design effective strategies, and identify next steps in a comprehensive action plan to develop a multiparty agreement.

This section of the Policy Action Guide will walk you through the key aspects of a multiparty agreement initiative, including:

- Understanding the Context and Process
- Who Should Be Involved
  - Identifying Partners
  - Establishing Leadership
- What Needs to Be Done
  - Obtaining Input and Building Support
  - Developing the Draft
  - Planning an Outreach Strategy
  - Planning Implementation Strategies
  - Identifying Resources
  - Assessing the Results

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**Multiparty Agreement** – A document that outlines how two or more parties (such as government agencies and community-based nonprofits) will work together toward a common goal. The multiparty agreement may establish or clarify roles, responsibilities, procedures, and monitoring.

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**Reminder:** As you proceed, keep in mind your initial policy objectives and how they apply to an initiative to develop a multiparty agreement.

## Understanding the Context and Process

The parties involved in crafting a multiparty agreement need to be familiar with relevant mandates, policies, and procedures, which guide each organization's practices and may influence how the organizations can work together. Further, the organizations will benefit from developing a shared understanding of the historic context and rationale for the agreement and identifying and addressing potential obstacles.



### Important considerations include:

- What current multiparty agreements (e.g., interagency agreements, memoranda of understandings, memoranda of agreements) do partner organizations, including yours, have? Are there provisions you can borrow or build from? Will this agreement supersede or amend any previous agreements?
- Are there existing policies (e.g., Federal or State laws, internal policies) or established practices that may restrict or support the agreement?
- Are there any data—internal or external—or multiparty agreements in other locations that support your approach?
- How can a proposed agreement be mutually beneficial to the various organizations and the children and families they serve?
- What may partners need to give up as a result of the agreement? Is the tradeoff an acceptable one, or can it be adjusted to make it acceptable to all parties?

Please respond to the following:

1. Does your proposed agreement change an existing agreement or create a new one? If it changes one, what is the current agreement?

2. What practices, procedures, or other policies may be affected by the agreement?

Procedures, practices, or other policies affected by the agreement	Proposed strategies to address these issues

3. Describe any research, data, or other policies that support the content of your multiparty agreement.

#### 4. What other considerations, decisions, or next steps need to be addressed to plan and prepare for a multiparty agreement?



##### Resources

- [California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare](#)
- [Laws and Policies](#) – Child Welfare Information Gateway
- [Laws and Policies](#) – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families
- [Laws and Policies That Promote Systems of Care](#) – Child Welfare Information Gateway
- [National Conference of State Legislatures](#) – Provides information about State and Federal legislation and resources on a variety of issue areas.
- [Promising Practices Network on Children, Families and Communities](#)
- [State and Local Government on the Net](#)
- [THOMAS](#) – Library of Congress. Information about Federal legislation.

## Who Should Be Involved

Determining the right organizations and people to be involved, as well as who will serve as leaders, are key components to any policy initiative. While one organization or individual may initiate the multiparty agreement and direct the recruitment of partners, another organization or individual may emerge to guide the planning and/or implementation processes.

## Identifying Partners

Partnering organizations for a multiparty agreement typically have overlapping client bases or services. By strengthening their collaborative partnership through a written agreement, child- and family-serving organizations can leverage resources, coordinate services, and enhance their effectiveness and efficiency in meeting the needs of children and families. A core group of representatives from each organization can work together to plan and prepare for the development of the multiparty agreement. This group may need to reach out to decision-makers who will sign the agreement, as well as frontline staff and managers who will implement the agreement's provisions.



##### Important considerations for choosing the appropriate team members include:

- Who are the representatives within the identified organizations that will be involved in the planning process? Will more than one person representing each interest or organization be involved (e.g., administrators, managers, frontline staff)? Are there enough representatives to ensure a diverse opinion among the group?
- Do the individuals representing each partner have the authority to make decisions on behalf of his or her organization or group?

- How will stakeholders from all groups that will be affected by the agreement (e.g., families, youth, other community members) play a role as partners in developing the agreement (e.g., participate in workgroups)?
- How do potential partners work together? Is there a history of collaboration?

Please respond to the following:

1. Potential Partners

Name of individual or organization	Affiliation (if an individual)	Current or prospective partner?	Role in the policy initiative	Resource (e.g., expertise, funding) the partner can provide

2. What other considerations, decisions, or next steps need to be addressed to identify potential partners for the development of your multiparty agreement?



## Resources

- **Building and Sustaining Child Welfare Partnerships** (PDF – 595 KB) – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care
- **Collaboration** – National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement
- **Community Partnerships: Improving the Response to Child Maltreatment** – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children’s Bureau, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect. Chapter 3 describes how to build and sustain community partnerships, including selecting partners.
- **The Community Toolbox** – University of Kansas, Work Group for Community Health and Development. See Chapter 9 for information about establishing a team to create and run your initiative.
- **Interagency and Cross System Collaboration** – Child Welfare Information Gateway
- **Interagency Collaboration** – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care
- **Promising Practices: Building Collaboration in Systems of Care** (PDF – 372 KB) – University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, Research and Training Center for Children’s Mental Health
- **2007 CFSR Toolkit for Youth Involvement: Engaging Youth in the Child and Family Services Review** (PDF – 3,119 KB) – National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement and the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Youth Development

## Establishing Leadership

While multiparty agreements ultimately require accord among all participating organizations, one organization, or one individual within that organization, may take the lead in the planning process. An effective leader will hold the trust and respect of the various parties involved and be skillful in building consensus among them.



### The following are important considerations when selecting the appropriate leader:

- Does the proposed leader have a pre-existing relationship with the partnering organizations, especially their decision-makers? If so, is it positive?
- Does the proposed leader possess important leadership qualities (e.g., honesty, dedication, good listening, credibility)? Can the proposed leader serve as an effective facilitator, consensus builder, and motivator among partners?
- Does the proposed leader have a background in developing multiparty agreements?
  - If yes, is there a strong record of success?
  - If no, what resources would be needed to provide this person with the necessary support?
- Will one person serve as the leader, or will multiple people serve in leadership roles? If multiple people, what will their roles be?
- How will decisions be made in the group? Will decision-making powers vary, depending on the type of decision (e.g., spending funds, policy content)?

### Please respond to the following:

1. Who will lead the development of the multiparty agreement?

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2. What are the leader’s responsibilities? If multiple people will lead, what, if any, are each person’s distinct roles and responsibilities as a leader?
  3. How will decisions be made?
  4. What other considerations, decisions, or next steps need to be addressed to establish leadership for the development of your multiparty agreement?



## Resources

- **The Center for Community Leadership**
- **The Community Toolbox** – University of Kansas, Work Group for Community Health and Development. See Part E for information about leadership, management, and group facilitation.
- **Leadership Guidance** (PDF – 239 KB) – American Public Human Services Association, Positioning Public Child Welfare Guidance
- **Leadership in the *Improving Child Welfare Outcomes through Systems of Care Initiative*** (PDF – 573 KB) – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children’s Bureau
- **Leadership Resources** – Child Welfare Information Gateway
- **National Child Welfare Leadership Institute**
- **Systems of Care Infrastructure Toolkit: Governance** – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care

## What Needs To Be Done

The specific action steps for a policy initiative will vary, depending on several factors, including the issue to be addressed, the locality, and the established procedures within each of the participating organizations. It also may be shaped by the assessment presented earlier in the Policy Action Guide. When you are trying to affect policy through multiparty agreements, however, there are certain general steps that should be incorporated:

- Obtaining input and building support
- Developing the draft
- Planning an outreach strategy
- Planning implementation strategies
- Identifying resources
- Assessing the results

## Obtaining Input and Building Support

There is increasing recognition of the critical importance of incorporating consumer input into policy development processes. In addition, successful execution of new multiparty agreements requires acceptance and application at multiple levels within relevant organizations from administrators to direct service staff. As such, it is essential to gather input from and rally support among the various levels of staff through multiple avenues. Bringing all stakeholders into the policy process and actively encouraging buy in early will help contribute to a broader base of support later during the agreement’s implementation.



### Important considerations for obtaining input and building support include:

- What strategies will be used to gain buy in and build early support for the multiparty agreement?
- How will input on the need for and proposed content of the agreement be gathered (e.g., discussion forums, surveys, representatives serving on a policy workgroup) from key stakeholder groups, including:
  - Each organization’s staff (e.g., direct service workers, supervisors, managers), who will be required to implement or oversee practices or procedures directed by the multiparty agreement?
  - Service recipients (e.g., youth, family members, community representatives) who will benefit from or be affected by the agreement?
- Who are the existing champions of the multiparty agreement who can encourage buy in among their peers? Are there other formal or informal leaders that could be engaged to garner support?

Please respond to the following:

1.
- Who needs to be contacted about the proposed multiparty agreement? What approaches will be taken to gather input and garner support?

Stakeholder group	How will their input be collected?

2.
- What other considerations, decisions, or next steps need to be addressed to obtain input from and build support among key stakeholder groups?





## Resources

- **Building Community Support** – Child Welfare Information Gateway
- **The Community Toolbox** – University of Kansas, Work Group for Community Health and Development. See Part B, which includes information about obtaining input from stakeholders; Part C, which provides information about promoting interest in community issues and encouraging the involvement of diverse groups; and Part I, which includes information about using the media to promote a cause.
- **Integrating Systems of Care: Improving Quality of Care for the Most Vulnerable Children and Families** (PDF – 534 KB) – Child Welfare League of America. See Chapter 2 for information about engaging youth, families, and communities in systems integration.
- **Leadership in Systems of Care: Creating and Communicating a Shared Vision** (PDF - 565 KB) – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care
- **Mobilizing Others** – National Alliance to End Homelessness
- **Mobilizing Through Social Media** – National Alliance to End Homelessness
- **Systems of Care Infrastructure Toolkit: Communication** – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care
- **Systems of Care Infrastructure Toolkit: Strategic Planning** – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care
- **Use of Communication in Quality Improvement** – Child Welfare Information Gateway

## Developing the Draft

Generally, multiparty agreements will clarify the roles, responsibilities, and joint activities of two or more organizations. The draft format will vary from partnership to partnership and may range from one to several pages. Common components of a multiparty agreement include: a statement of purpose and scope, an outline of responsibilities, expected activities, or shared resources of each participating organization; the specified time period; a definition of terms; a monitoring process; how the agreement can be amended or terminated; and signatures.

You should review existing agreements from other localities in case they can serve as models from which you can adapt key provisions. Take your time and have multiple stakeholders review drafts to ensure that all important angles of the agreement are being addressed.



## Considerations:

- Who will draft the agreement? Can partner staff develop the agreement, or is an outside consultant/facilitator needed?
- Who will need to approve the agreement? What is the review and approval process?
- Have you consulted with legal professionals about any legal ramifications, including whether the agreement will be legally binding?
- What are the key processes, procedures, or practices that will be addressed by the agreement (e.g., information sharing, collaborative case planning, interagency training, a special event)?
- What level of partner commitment you are seeking through the agreement? The level of commitment could range from showing support to taking more substantive action, such as coordinating activities, modifying and aligning procedures, integrating systems, or providing funding)?
- Have you outlined each partner's roles, responsibilities, and expectations for developing the agreement?
- For what time period will the agreement be in place? What is the process for reviewing and updating the agreement? For terminating it? Will the agreement still be valid through leadership changes in any of the partnering organizations?

Please respond to the following:

1. Who will develop the draft agreement?

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2. What is the review and approval process for the agreement?

3. What are the key roles and responsibilities of participating partners that will be addressed by the agreement?

4. For what timeframe will the agreement be in effect?

5. What other considerations, decisions, or next steps need to be addressed to develop the agreement?



## Resources

- **Community Partnerships: Improving the Response to Child Maltreatment** – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children’s Bureau, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect. Appendix I includes key questions to consider when writing MOUs
- **The Community Toolbox** – University of Kansas, Work Group for Community Health and Development. Information about understanding and writing contracts and memoranda of understanding.
- **Developing Interagency Agreements: 4 Questions to Consider** – Institute for Community Inclusion
- **Developing Interagency Agreements: The Road Map for Transition** (PDF – 1607 KB) – Florida’s Transition Project for Infants, Young Children and Their Families
- **Interagency Collaboration** – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care
- **King County Systems Integration Project** – Child Welfare League of America. Information about a collaboration of State and local agencies from the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, including sample multiparty agreements.
- **Policy Matters: Setting and Measuring Benchmarks for State Policies** (PDF – 1,541 KB) – Center for the Study of Social Policy
- **PolicyForResults.org** – Provides information on research-based policy strategies to improve the lives of children and families.
- **Systems of Care Infrastructure Toolkit: Policy** – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care
- **Writing Guide for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** (PDF – 852 KB) – U.S. Department of Homeland Security

## Planning an Outreach Strategy

An effective outreach strategy will encourage buy-in and involvement of stakeholders in the development of the proposed multiparty agreement and also support education and marketing efforts after it has been signed. Announcing the agreement through multiple internal and external channels, including media outlets, will help pave the way for successful implementation. In your communications, be sure to underscore the benefits of the agreement not only for the partnering organizations and their staff, but also for the children and families they serve.



### Important considerations for developing an outreach strategy include:

- Who needs to be notified about the finalized agreement because it will affect them (e.g., caseworkers, foster families)? What is the message for each audience? How will the audience be contacted (e.g., flyers, one-on-one meetings, community meetings, mass media, press conference, press release)?
- Should your team contact the media to publicize the enacted agreement? Hold a special event to mark the signing?
- Are there any data or other supporting evidence that can be used to gain buy-in and broad-based support for the agreement?

### Please respond to the following:

#### 1. Who needs to be notified about the enacted agreement because it will affect them?

Stakeholder Group	Message to each audience	How will the message be delivered?

## 2. What other considerations, decisions, or next steps need to be addressed to develop the communications and outreach plan



### Resources

- **Gaining Buy-in From the Front Line During Times of Change** – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care
- **Improving Child Welfare Outcomes Through Systems of Care: Systems of Care Guide: Guide for Strategic Planning** (PDF – 4696 KB) – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care
- **The Role of Social Marketing in System Reform** – Child Welfare Information Gateway
- **Systems of Care Infrastructure Toolkit: Communication** – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care
- **Use of Communication in Quality Improvement** – Child Welfare Information Gateway

## Planning Implementation Strategies

Even before the multiparty agreement is enacted, you should begin planning for implementation. Think about how the new agreement will require changes in work processes and skill requirements and how those changes can be facilitated through recruitment, training, coaching and supervision, data systems, and administrative practices. Since policy implementation is a dynamic process, these strategies will likely evolve over time.



### Important considerations for developing implementation strategies include:

- What obstacles need to be overcome (e.g., confidentiality policies, contrasting operating procedures, long-standing traditions of working independently)? What are the proposed strategies to do so?
- Who, if anyone, will require training or other professional development to understand and fully implement the agreement?
- How will this agreement be made part of day-to-day practice in the partner organizations? What internal policies, procedures, and practices will change or be established because of the new agreement?
- What procedure manuals, monitoring and reporting systems, and other supports will need to be developed or modified to reflect the agreement?
- How will staffing, coaching, or supervision be used to help staff align day-to-day practices with the new agreement? What changes, if any, will be needed in recruitment? In staff performance evaluation?

Please respond to the following:

1. Who, if anyone, will require training or other professional development about the agreement in order to fully implement it?

2. What new approaches or modifications will be needed to support effective implementation?

Components	New approaches or modifications
Staffing and recruitment	
Training and other professional development	
Coaching and supervision	
Performance appraisal	
Policy manuals	
Data and reporting systems	
Administrative processes	
Internal policies or regulations	
Multiparty agreements	
Other	

3. What other considerations, decisions, or next steps need to be addressed to plan outreach and implementation strategies?



## Resources

- **The Community Toolbox** – University of Kansas, Work Group for Community Health and Development. Chapter about how to institutionalize an initiative.
- **Implementation Resources Section** – California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse
- **Improving Child Welfare Outcomes Through Systems of Care: Building the Infrastructure: A Guide for Communities** (PDF – 2004 KB) – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care
- **Improving Child Welfare Outcomes Through Systems of Care: Systems of Care Guide: Guide for Strategic Planning** (PDF – 4696 KB) – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care
- **National Implementation Research Network (NIRN)**
- **Systems of Care Infrastructure Toolkit: Training Development and Human Resources** – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care

## Identifying Resources

You will need to assess resource needs for the planning and development of the multiparty agreement, as well as for its implementation. The agreement may require the partners to pool or share funds, staff, or other resources to undertake some of the activities outlined in the agreement, and the process for this should be considered before implementing the agreement. Additionally, if the agreement creates new services or procedures, each partner will need to ensure that it has the monetary and nonmonetary (e.g., expertise) resources to support the agreement.



### Important considerations for identifying and obtaining resources include:

- What staff hours will be needed to coordinate work among the partners and help draft agreements?
- What resources are needed to support meetings, events, or other activities outlined in the agreement (e.g., meeting space, meals, transportation reimbursement)?
- Will the agreement require the partnering organizations to pool funding or share financial obligations (e.g., for a shared staff member)? If so, are there any organizational rules about such agreements? How will the funds be distributed? Who will be in charge of spending those funds?
- Will additional staff or resources be needed to fulfill the requirements of or publicize the agreement (e.g., staff training, community outreach)?
- Is an expert consultant or facilitator needed to help gain consensus or guide the multiparty agreement process?

### Please respond to the following:

#### 1. What resources will be required?

Resource	Source	Purpose

2. What other considerations, decisions, or next steps need to be addressed to gather adequate resources for the development of the multiparty agreement?



### Resources

- **Community Partnerships: Improving the Response to Child Maltreatment** – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children’s Bureau, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect. Chapter 3 provides an overview of how to build and sustain a community partnership, including securing funding and other resources.
- **The Community Toolbox** – University of Kansas, Work Group for Community Health and Development. See Part L, which provides information about generating, managing, and sustaining financial resources, and Part M, which provides information about soliciting contributions and in-kind support.
- **Effective Financing Strategies for Systems of Care: Examples from the Field: A Resource Compendium for Developing a Comprehensive Financing Plan** (PDF – 2,809 KB) – University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, Research and Training Center for Children’s Mental Health
- **Finding Federal Funding** – The Finance Project
- **Grants.gov** – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- **Management and Supervision Funding** – Child Welfare Information Gateway
- **Maximizing Program Services Through Private Sector Partnerships and Relationships: A Guide for Faith- and Community-Based Service Providers** (PDF – 2,590 KB) – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Treatment
- **Systems of Care Infrastructure Toolkit: Finance** – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care

## Assessing the Results

Assessing results can provide vital information for the multiparty agreement, as well as future efforts. Routine assessment of data can ensure that the multiparty agreement is on its intended course, identify needs for future revisions, or help establish successful procedures. The assessment can range from debrief meetings to more rigorous evaluation.



### Some important considerations for the assessment of your multiparty agreement:

- What are the desired goals and objectives for the multiparty agreement? What are the anticipated benefits for children and families? For staff?
- What data can you obtain to track benchmarks and progress toward goals and objectives? Will you be gathering qualitative data, quantitative data, or both? Will you be soliciting feedback from all stakeholders? How?

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- How will you monitor adherence to the agreement? Who will be responsible for monitoring? How will the results be distributed to decision makers and other stakeholders?
  - Does one of the team members have skills/expertise in assessment? Does an outside provider need to be brought in to provide assessment support?
  - Will you need additional funds for the assessment? Are those funds available?

**Please respond to the following:**

1. Who will conduct the assessment?
2. What goals or objectives might you assess?
3. How will you obtain data to measure those goals and objectives?
4. What challenges do you anticipate and how will you attempt to overcome them?



## 5. What other considerations, decisions, or next steps need to be addressed to assess the results of the agreement?



### Resources

- **The Advocacy Evaluation Update Newsletter** – Center for Evaluation Innovation
- **Community Partnerships: Improving the Response to Child Maltreatment** – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children’s Bureau, Office on Child Abuse and Neglect. Chapter 5 discusses how to measure the results of a community partnership.
- **The Community Toolbox** – University of Kansas, Work Group for Community Health and Development. See Part J for information about evaluating community programs and initiatives.
- **Evaluating Advocacy and Policy Change** – Innovation Network
- **Evaluating Program, Practice, and Service Effectiveness** – Child Welfare Information Gateway
- **The Evaluation Exchange: A Periodical on Emerging Strategies in Evaluation** (Spring 2007) (PDF- 1560 KB) – Harvard Graduate School of Education, Harvard Family Research Project
- **A Guide to Measuring Policy and Advocacy** (PDF – 256 KB) – Organizational Research Services (for Annie E. Casey Foundation)
- **Pathfinder: A Practical Guide to Advocacy Evaluation** (PDF – 1148 KB) – Innovation Network
- **The Program Manager’s Guide to Evaluation** – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation
- **Systems of Care Infrastructure Toolkit: Continuous Quality Improvement** – National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care

## Wrap-Up

Carefully thinking through the considerations and responding to the questions in each of the preceding sections of the Action Plan Form can help your policy team systematically plan and set the groundwork for a successful multiparty agreement. Additionally, you can use this information to complete the Next Steps Template, which is at the end of this document. You can share your Action Plan, including the Next Steps Template, with partners and other stakeholders to further develop the decisions and strategies. Furthermore, you can review this document throughout your policy initiative and amend it as needed.

As you proceed with your multiparty agreement, remember that there is not a one-size-fits-all policy process. You should remain flexible in your approach, which will better enable you and your partners to work within an ever-changing social and political environment. Additionally, keep in mind that policy change is only one component in a comprehensive and ongoing change process and needs to be implemented in conjunction with supportive infrastructure elements. Above all, though, remember the ultimate underlying goal in your policy efforts: improving the lives of children and families.

# Next Steps Template

This template can be used to develop a step-by-step plan for your policy initiative. Under activities, refer to the key aspects of a policy initiative that are outlined in the Policy Action Guide (e.g., establishing leadership, identifying partners, developing an outreach strategy). For the tasks, review the responses you provided as you went through the Policy Action Guide and think about the next steps required to successfully achieve each activity (e.g., sending an introductory email to stakeholders, coordinating an event). For each task, designate who will be responsible, the anticipated timeframe, and expected outcomes or products. The level of detail is up to you, but more specificity in the planning stage may make the implementation process easier to manage. You can update the last column (Status) as the initiative proceeds in order to help you track progress.

Activity	Task	Person Responsible	Estimated Start Date	Estimated Completion Date	Expected Outcome(s) or Product(s)	Status (e.g., Not Started, In Progress, Completed)